

Leonor Loree and the Delaware & Hudson Railroad by Peter H. Grant

By S. Robert Powell. Ph.D.

Peter Grant's *Leonor Loree and the Delaware & Hudson Railroad* is a biographical portrait of Leonor Fresnel Loree, from 1877, when he was hired by the Pennsylvania Railroad as a rodman, to 1938, when he retired from railroading, having given a magnificent performance for 31 years as the eighth president of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad, 1907-1938.

Among the many remarkable qualities of this portrait of Loree by Peter Grant is the fact that in the first third of the book Grant focuses on Loree's railroad career before 1907, when he was elected President of the D&H. As such, as we read the book, we can witness first-hand the formation of the man whose career in railroading embodies the final and best portrait of a nineteenth century railroad magnate who followed his star in spite of the shackles that were imposed upon him by the Federal government and labor unions.

Leonor F. Loree, American civil engineer, lawyer, and railroad executive (born April 23, 1858, in Fulton, Whiteside County, IL) was a well-educated man. He was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in 1877, a Master of Science degree in 1880, a Civil Engineering degree in 1896, and a Doctor of Law degree in 1917, all from Rutgers College (Loree was trustee of Rutgers University from 1909 to 1940). He was also awarded a Doctor of Engineering degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1933.

In 1877, with a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering in hand, he launched his career in railroad work when he accepted a position with the Pennsylvania Railroad as an Assistant Engineer on the Chicago Division of the Pennsylvania Lines West of Pittsburgh (later promoted to become General Manager of the Pennsylvania Railroad Lines West, 1896-1900, and later Fourth Vice President of Lines West, 1900-1901; in total he worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad for 21 years). In later railroad work, he served as Manager and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kansas City Southern Railway Company; President of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company (elected June 1, 1901; served as such for 3 years), and President of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company.

Loree had a life-long interest in railroad motive power. In 1903, while serving as President of the B&O, he ordered, from the American Locomotive Company, the first articulated Mallet type locomotive in the United States (designed by John E. Muhlfeld), for use on the mountain grades in western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Also in 1903, Loree, along with Frank P. J. Patenall, patented (U.S. patent 733,981) an upper quadrant system which placed a second semaphore above an existing semaphore on the same post. This soon became the most widely used form of railroad lineside signal in North America (railroads continued to use them until the 1940s).

That railroad experience would serve Loree well when he became, on April 10, 1907, at age 48, the eighth president of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad. Loree's achievements / track record as D&H President are the primary content of Peter Grant's book.

When elected president of the D&H in 1907, Loree devoted his time and talents to rehabilitating and rebuilding the D&H, focusing largely on four areas: motive power, yards, right of way, and engine terminals.

Consider, for example, what Loree and the D&H did for Carbondale: At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the D&H on February 23, 1910, an expenditure of \$3,920.34 was recommended by the Directors for changes in the yard and engine house at Carbondale (said by many to be “the most important shop town on Loree’s D&H”, with the performance of the Carbondale facility affecting the entire railroad) to accommodate the new Mallet locomotives. On November 30, 1910, the Executive Committee again focused their attention on Carbondale, recommending the expenditure of \$59,000 for relocating the Lackawanna River and purchasing property thus adding about 50 acres to the rail yard, an increase in yard capacity of about 200%. An additional \$200,000 was recommended for construction of a coal storage yard south of the city of Carbondale (Duffy’s Field) and \$200,265 for the construction of a 40-stall roundhouse. Reconstruction of the yard began in 1914. Its length increased from approximately 5,000 feet and a capacity of 2,100 freight cars to 7,200 feet and 3,139 cars, increasing car capacity by 49.48%.

Yard facilities were also built or reconstructed at Oneonta, Glenville, Binghamton, Mechanicville, Plattsburg and Rouses Point, all in New York, and Jermyn, PA. Locomotive terminal improvements: Oneonta, new ash pits; Binghamton, 10-stall roundhouse; Colonie, 30- stall roundhouse, Mechanicville, 5-stall roundhouse; and Colonie, a new locomotive shop.

At the January 26, 1912 meeting of the Board of Managers, the Directors agreed that the company should terminate its dependence upon trackage rights on the Lehigh Valley Railroad in downtown Wilkes-Barre and built what became known as the Wilkes-Barre Connecting Railroad (6.65 mile connecting road between Hudson and Buttonwood on the Pennsylvania Railroad).

Modernization of D&H motive power was Loree’s passion. In 1910 he ordered six 0-8-8-0 Mallet compounds from the American Locomotive Works; in 1911-1912, he ordered seven more. In 1914, he purchased ten Pacifics (4-6-2) from Alco for the Montreal passenger service. In 1916, No. 1200 (E-6, 2-8-0, 63,950 pounds of tractive effort) was made by Alco for the D&H. The following year, 1917, Loree ordered 20 E-6a engines from Alco. From the early 20s to the mid-30s, under his direction, more than 100 locomotives were rebuilt by the D&H: chrome plating was added to boiler jackets, smoke detectors were added to the 10 Pacifics, all locomotives got a coat of black enamel, roller bearings were added to driver journals.

On December 28, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson, by proclamation, took over all transportation systems in the United States. Before the government took over the D&H, the company photographed its real estate (hundreds of those historically very important photos now exist and have been scanned by BLHS member Mike Bischak for the D&H archives) and for two years and two months the Federal government ran the railroads in the United States, and inaugurated changes in the wage scale and a rigid seniority role for promotions and layoffs, disregarding an employee’s

ability. (Loree was opposed to such changes, and in 1931 introduced a monthly wage payment plan that eliminated the consideration of mileage, leaving only time, in the calculation of wages. Loree's proposal was rejected by the unions.) The pernicious consequences of the Federal government's heavy hand in American railroads, coupled with the cancerous growth of labor unions and the emergence of welfare capitalism polluted, and eventually destroyed, the American industrial playing field (and the companies that were established thereon) that was established in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by visionary capitalist and railroad magnates like Leonor Loree. As Loree observed in his Centennial address on April 23, 1923: "Railroading is no longer a business, it has become a calamity."

Particularly galling to Loree, as we learn from Peter Grant's presentation of these problematical years in the history of the D&H, was the fact that in the government and union-controlled railroads that emerged at this time, the individual qualities and qualifications of the men who worked on the railroads were disregarded in the employment decision-making process. Loree, on the other hand, believed that "Railroads should not be bound by rigid rules that do not take into consideration qualifications other than seniority status..." There were, said Loree, three ways to improve the quality of the workforce: "...employ a better class of men, discharge the vicious and incompetent, and educate those kept." Harnessed by the Federal government and by labor unions, Loree directed his energies to projects that could be carried out in spite of the federal government and the unions.

Loree knew what he wanted when it came to engines and he refused, for example, to have stokers installed on locomotives. The result was that the helper Mallets built for use as pushers over the mountain at Ararat on the Jefferson Branch required two firemen. As a consequence of such decisions on the part of Loree, he was sharply criticized by some "knowledgeable" railroad workers (and, most surprisingly, by one well-known railroad historian) as being an "old man with technological backwardness who was out of touch." Loree, however, was not for a minute slowed down by such comments from self-serving, narrow minded, and inconsequential "experts"—who, unlike Loree, were incapable of seeing the big picture--and proceeded full steam ahead to accomplish his objectives as the engineer in charge at the head of the D&H.

On April 23, 1923, the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company was one hundred years old, and an unbelievable sequence of commemorative events was organized by the D&H, with Loree in charge, in the course of the year. The two primary events associated with the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the incorporation of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company were (1) the writing and publication by the D&H of *A Century of Progress: History of the Delaware and Hudson Company 1823-1923*. (The writing and publication of *Century of Progress* during Loree's presidency is the primary D&H archival achievement in the entire history of the D&H. If the book had not been written when it was, an immense body of data about the D&H would have been lost to history.) In the *Foreword to Century of Progress*, "which owes its existence especially to the energy and interest of Mr. George H. Burgess, Mr. William J. Coughtry and Mr. Henry Opdyke," the author of the *Foreword* (Loree himself) acknowledges the assistance of Miss Alice Voyle Rashleigh of Carbondale (among many other persons) in the writing of *Century of Progress*, and

(2) A centennial dinner held at the Hotel Astor in New York City at 7:30 P.M. on April 23, with D&H President Leonor Loree presiding and acting as toastmaster, followed by a rail excursion to Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, Carbondale and Honesdale, the rail excursion, the “Centennial Special” (a rider coach, the president’s private car, six Pullmans, and an observation car at the rear) to depart, immediately after the dinner, and soon after midnight, over the Lehigh Valley Railroad for Wilkes-Barre. When in Pennsylvania, the excursion group visited the Laflin Breaker, where the group were served breakfast in three dining cars that were drawn up on an adjacent track. The group then visited the Marvine Breaker “the most modern and efficient anthracite breaker in the anthracite region” and then proceeded to the Hotel Casey Scranton where they were joined by many of the Company’s officers and employees who had come to Scranton from Albany the previous evening on an “auxiliary special”.

Present at the *Centennial Luncheon* at the Hotel Casey were three hundred guests. The program following the luncheon was opened with remarks by Charles S. Weston, a member of the Board of Managers of the D&H who said the following about Leonor Loree: “Mr. Loree has been aptly called the *Railroad Surgeon of the World*. That means that he is an operating man in every sense of the word. He knows the anatomy of railroads and he knows how to cure their ills, and let me say with all the force that is within me, that if the public and the commissions and the politicians would stop nagging the railroads and give Mr. Loree and the other railroad executives who have made a life study of the business half a chance to operate their properties with unnecessary interference, the public would have better service, shippers would have lower rates, labor troubles would be minimized, if not eliminated, the country would be more prosperous, and everybody would be happy except the cranks, and they wouldn’t be happy in Heaven.” Following his introductory remarks, Charles Weston then introduced President Loree, who served as toastmaster, and delivered an address titled “The Century’s Association of Management, Capital and Labor.” At 2:40 PM, the Centennial group boarded a train for Carbondale, which on its way to Honesdale traveled on tracks laid on former Gravity Railroad roadbeds. At Honesdale, the excursion visitors boarded an Erie train for the trip back to New York City.

The account of the D&H centennial celebration is the content of Chapter XVII in *Century of Progress* (pp. 505-594). The complete texts of all the remarks and addresses of all of the speakers at all of the Centennial events are presented therein, as are the names of all of the persons who attended those events. Also included are photos of all menus and programs. If you have never read that chapter, which is 89 pages in length, do yourself a favor and read it.

In the years following the D&H Centennial celebrations, Loree again focused on D&H motive power, and the four magnificent Loree “experimentals” were built: in 1924, the *Horatio Allen*, No. 1400; in 1927, the *John B. Jervis*, No. 1401; in 1930, the *James Archbald*, No. 1402; and in 1933, the *L. F. Loree*, No. 1403 (see photo of No. 1403 in the April 2025 issue of the *BLHS Bulletin*, p. 21). Presented here is a photo of D&H No.1400, during a visit to Honesdale, PA on August 8, 1929.

Given Loree's solid academic background, it is not at all surprising that in 1923 he founded the Newcomen Society of the United States, a non-profit educational foundation for "the study and recognition of achievement in American business and the society it serves". It was modeled after the Newcomen Society of Great Britain that was founded in 1920 in London. Both groups took their name from Thomas Newcomen (1663-1729), the British industrial pioneer whose invention of the atmospheric steam engine in 1712 led to the first practical use of such a device: lifting water out of mines. Newcomen's invention helped facilitate the birth of the Industrial Revolution, and he is frequently referred to as the "Father of the Industrial Revolution".

Its declaration of purpose was to preserve, protect and promote the American free enterprise system, and to encourage and stimulate original research and writing in the field of business history through a program of academic awards, grants, and fellowships. The Newcomen Society of North America championed American capitalism, material civilization, and entrepreneurship. By 1981 the Newcomen Society in North America had 17,000 members. It was active between 1923 and 2007 and was responsible for more than 1,600 individual histories of organizations, from corporations to colleges, which were distributed to libraries and its membership.

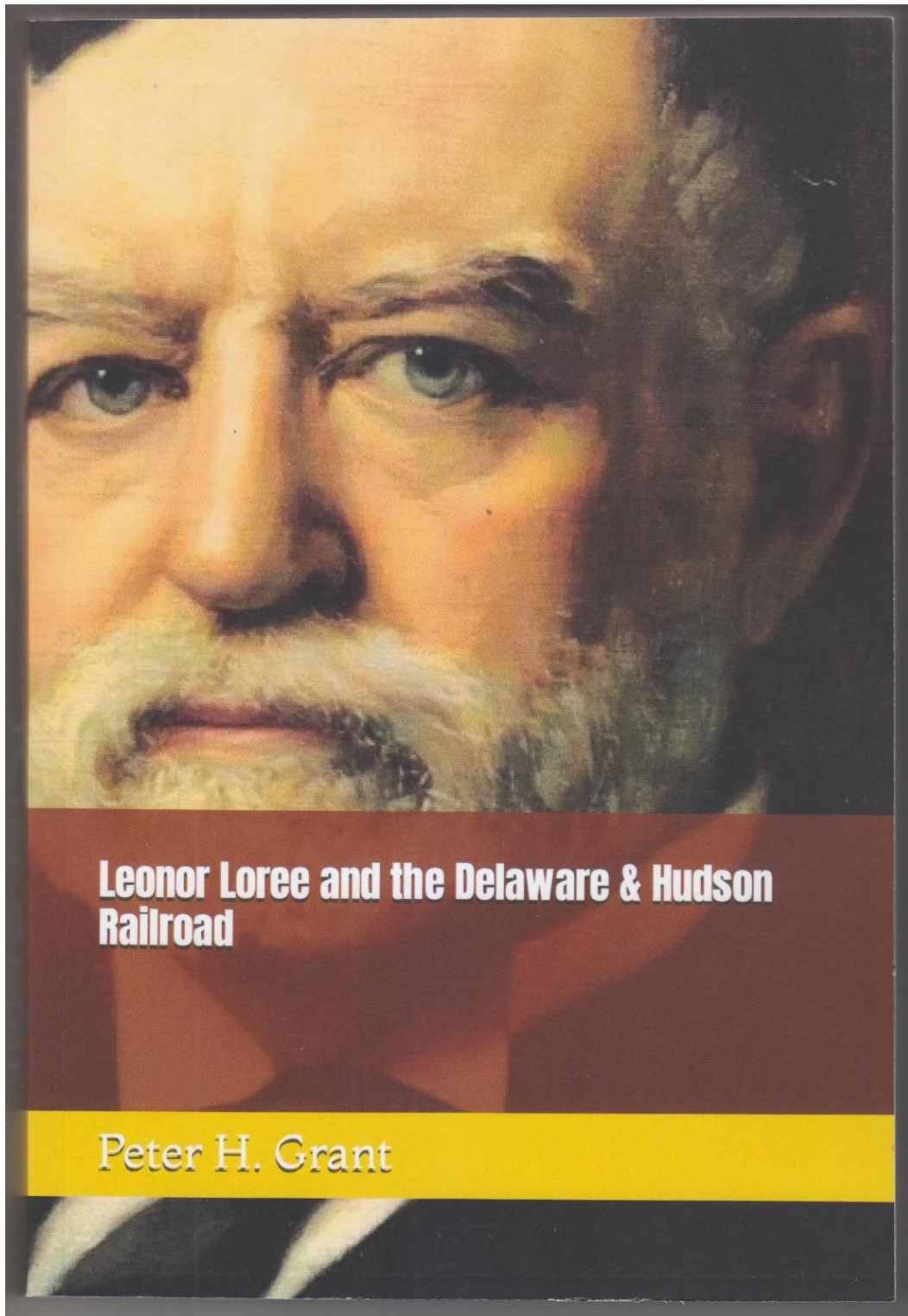
On December 17, 2007, Chairman Daniel V. Malloy and the trustees announced that the Newcomen Society of the United States would close. Over its 84-year existence, it honored more than 2,500 organizations and institutions. The archives of the Newcomen Society of the United States are preserved at the National Museum of Industrial History at Bethlehem, PA.

Remarkable facts about Loree the man that are not generally known emerge periodically in Peter Grant's remarkable portrait of the man: Loree was a voracious reader, and it was not unusual for him to read three books in a single day. He resided on a 31-acre country estate named "Bowood" in West Orange, New Jersey that he bought in 1911 and which he developed over the years, and where he established a herd of Guernsey cattle and a flock of Orpington chickens, as well as a loft of Dutchess pigeons (the squabs of which were a culinary favorite of Loree's). There was an apiary on the estate. In the orchards at Bowood, there were apple, peach, pear, and cheery trees. [In the main building at Bowood, built in 1865, there were 27 rooms: 8 bathrooms, 6 master bedrooms, 3 guest rooms, servants' quarters, and an elevator. In the library there were 10,000 volumes. The staff at Bowood: 58 servants, gardeners, and chauffeurs.]

Leonor F. Loree: What an extraordinary man! The P. T. Barnum of railroading in America in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, a giant of a man, whose vision guided the D&H through thirty-one tumultuous years. On September 6, 1940, Loree died at West Orange, NJ.

Peter Grant's *Leonor Loree and the Delaware and Hudson Railroad* is an important addition to the history of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad. Whether you know very little about Loree or a great deal about Loree, your knowledge about the Delaware and Hudson Railroad and about railroading in America the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will be enriched if you read this book.

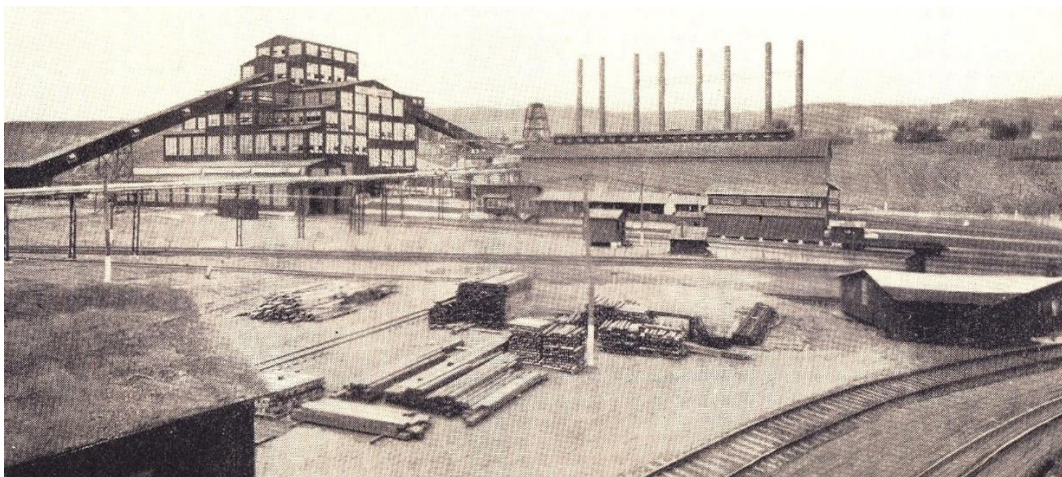
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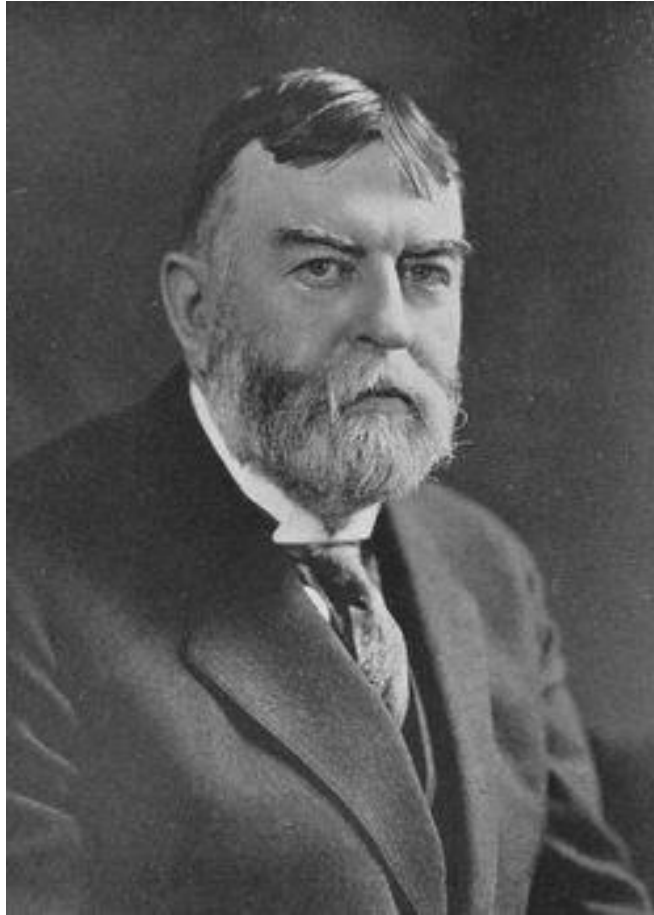
Front cover on Peter H. Grant's book on Leonor F. Loree



D&H No. 1400 Horatio Allen at Honesdale, PA, 08-08-1929



Loree Breaker



Leonor F. Loree

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Note on the date **April 23**: On April 23, **1823**, the New York Legislature passed a special act to incorporate “The President, Managers and Company of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company.” On April 23, **1861**, John Wurts, the third president of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, 1831-1858, died at Rome, Italy. On April 23, **1858**, Leonor F. Loree, the eighth president of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, 1907-1938, was born in Fulton, Whiteside County, Illinois. On April 23, **1923**, the D&H Centennial Banquet took place in the Hotel Astor in New York City. Leonor F. Loree served as toastmaster. “Nearly six hundred invitations were accepted and it is believed that the attendance at the dinner constituted one of the most distinguished gatherings held in New York City in many years.” On the following day, the D&H Centennial Luncheon, attended by 300 persons, took place in the Hotel Casey in Scranton.